

DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES (DMR)

FACT SHEET

Shellfish Program:

- Landed value of soft-shell clams in 2001 was \$17,390,832
- Current value of the resource to the State's economy is estimated at over \$51 million
- Soft-shell clams are the 3rd most valuable commercial species in Maine
- Number of Commercial Shellfish Licenses sold in 2001 was 2182
- Number of Certified Shellfish Dealers as of August 2002 was 119
- Number of municipalities having shellfish ordinances is 73
- Number of municipal commercial/recreational licenses sold in 2001 was 8,000 +
- Income generated from those municipal license sales in 2001 was \$313,078.74
- Total municipal disbursements for shellfish programs in 2001 was \$1,065,666.86
- Total value of resource landed in municipalities with ordinances in 2001 was \$15,963,614.25

Impacts:

- Three area biologists are responsible for providing technical assistance to 110 coastal communities covering over 3,500 miles of coastline; 73 of these municipalities have shellfish ordinances. Eliminating the area biologist positions would severely reduce the expertise and efficiency in developing/maintaining the various ordinances.
- Last year, the area biologists attended over 200 shellfish committee meetings, reviewed over 71 wetlands alteration applications for environmental impacts, and participated in over 60 shellfish-related events. DMR presence at these functions would be eliminated.
- Area biologists assist in the day-to-day operations of town management programs so that towns are able to meet minimum program requirements. Currently, 98% of the towns are in compliance with Department statute and regulations; however, DMR estimates that as many as 60% of those that participate in the program do not have the infrastructure and/or resources to maintain program eligibility without assistance.
- The area biologists assist coastal communities with their comprehensive plans as they relate to actual/potential impacts on marine resources. The municipalities would have to seek alternative sources for information and assistance.
- Many state, federal, and private agencies/organizations depend on technical information from the area biologists in evaluating impacts to coastal ecosystems. The availability of communicating and sharing this knowledge would be greatly reduced, if not eliminated. Organizations/programs that would be impacted include: Casco Bay Estuary Project, Maine Soft-shell Clam Advisory Council, New Meadows River Watershed Project, Casco Bay Regional Shellfish Committee, Portsmouth Naval Shipyard Restoration Advisory Board, Downeast Institute for Applied Marine Research & Education, Project SHARE, Damariscotta River Association, the Maine Coastal Program and the Maine Fisherman's Forum.
- The biologists provide backup field support to the labs in Lamoine and in Boothbay Harbor in the case of environmental emergencies such as oil spills, coastal flooding, or shellfish toxin events that may require additional resources. Loss of this additional support would result in more definitive closures of longer duration.
- Although not a primary function of the biologists, their expertise is utilized in evaluating shellfish growing areas for pollution abatement, reviewing area classifications, and

obtaining water quality samples. Areas subject to reclassifications may take longer to implement if this information is not readily available, thus restricting access by diggers.

- The results of a recent opinion survey conducted by the Department on municipalities with shellfish management programs overwhelming stated the importance of their programs to the towns and their citizens; the technical support from the area biologists and staff response from DMR's main office were rated as "excellent." This support will be severely impacted as a result of the loss of the area biologists.
- The area biologists assist the Maine Marine Patrol in conducting the annual Municipal Warden Training School, a certification requirement for all municipal wardens. A half-day session is devoted to shellfish management/conservation/shellfish sanitation. This session will have to be eliminated unless resources are made available to accomplish this task.

Since 1963, municipalities and the DMR have been co-managing the soft-shell clam resource. Although the program has been in existence for almost 40 years, the last 10 years have shown that substantial progress has been made; the results of those efforts can now be adequately documented. License sales have gradually increased by 10%, landings are up more than 50%, clam values are up over 60%, and the number of municipalities participating in the program has increased by 58%. The area biologists have played a critical role in helping municipalities accomplish these results. Shellfishing is no longer a "fishery of last resort," but a viable and sustainable industry that will remain so only if adequate resources are made available to coastal communities.

Department of Marine Resources
February 10, 2003